MANIFESTO

OF THE

Presidency and Apostles

ISSUED DECEMBER 12, 1889.

ALSO

THE OFFICIAL DECLARATION

OR MANIFESTO

BY

President Wilford Woodruff

Prohibiting Further Plural Marriages, and Its Adoption by the General Conference, October 6, 1890.

THE DESERET NEWS,
SALT LAKE CITY.

MANIFESTO

Of the Presidency and Apostles.

Salt Lake City, Dec. 12th, 1889.

To Whom It May Concern:

In consequence of gross misrepresentations of the doctrines, aims and practices of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly called the "Mormon" Church, which have been promulgated for years, and have recently been revived for political purposes and to prevent all aliens, otherwise qualified, who are members of the "Mormon" Church from acquiring citizenship, we deem it proper on behalf of said Church to publicly deny these calumnies and enter our protest against them.

We solemnly make the following declarations, viz:

That this Church views the shedding of human blood with the utmost abhorrence. That we regard the killing of a human being, except in conformity with the civil law, as a capital crime which should be punished by shedding the blood of the criminal after a public trial before a legally constituted court of the land.

Notwithstanding all the stories told about the killing of apostates, no case of this kind has ever occurred, and of course has never been established against the Church we represent. Hundreds of seceders from the Church have continuously resided and now live in this territory many of whom have amassed considerable wealth, though bitterly opposed to the Mormon faith and people. Even those who made it their business to fabricate the vilest falsehoods, and to render them plausible by culling isolated passages from old sermons without the explanatory context, and have suffered no opportunity to escape them of vilifying and blackening the characters of the people, have remained among those whom they have thus persistently calumniated until the present day, without receiving the slightest personal injury.

We denounce as entirely untrue the allegation which has been made, that our Church favors or believes in the killing of persons who leave the Church or apostatize from its doctrines. We would view a punishment of this character for such an act with the utmost horror; it is abhorrent to us and is in direct opposition to the fundamental principles of our creed.

The revelations of God to this Church make death the penalty of capital crime, and require that offenders against life and property shall be delivered up and tried by the laws of the land.

We declare that no bishop's or other court in this Church claims or exercises civil or judicial functions, or the right to supersede, annul or modify a judgment of any civil court. Such courts, while established to regulate Christian conduct, are purely ecclesiastical, and their punitive powers go no further than the suspension or excommunication of members from Church fellowship.

That this Church while offering advice for the welfare of its members in all conditions of life, does not claim or exercise the right to interfere with citizens in the free exercise of social or political rights and privileges. The ballot in this territory is absolutely untrammeled and secret. No man's business or secular affairs are invaded by the Church or any of its officers. Free agency and direct individual accountability to God are among the essentials of our Church doctrine. All things in the Church must be done by common consent, and no officer is appointed without the vote of the body.

We declare that there is nothing in the ceremony of the endowment, or in any doctrine, tenet, obligation or injunction of this Church, either private or public, which is hostile or intended to be hostile to the government of the United States. On the contrary, its members are under divine commandment to revere the constitution as a heaven-inspired instrument and obey as supreme all laws made in pursuance of its provisions.

Utterances of prominent men in the Church at a time of great excitement have been selected and grouped, to convey the impression that present members are seditious. Those expressions were made more than thirty years ago, when through the falshoods of recreant officials, afterwards demonstrated to be baseless, troops were sent to this territory and were viewed by the people in their isolated condition, fifteen hundred miles from railroads, as an armed mob coming to renew the bloody persecutions of years before.

At that time excitement prevailed and strong language was used; but no words of disloyalty against the government or its institutions were uttered; public speakers confined their remarks to denouncing traitorous officials who were prostituting the powers of their positions to accomplish nefarious ends. Criticism of the acts of the United States officials was not considered then, neither is it now, as treason against the nation nor as hostility to the government. In this connection we may say that the members of our Church have never offered nor intended to offer any insult to the flag of our country; but have always honored it as the ensign of laws and liberty.

We also declare that this Church does not claim to be an independent, temporal kingdom of God, or to be an *imperium in imperio* aiming to overthrow the United States or any other civil government. It has been organized by divine revelation preparatory to the second advent of the Redeemer. It proclaims that the "kingdom of heaven is at hand." Its members are

commanded of God to be subject unto the powers that be until Christ comes whose right it is to reign.

Church government and civil government are distinct and separate in our theory and practice, and we regard it as part of our destiny to aid in the maintenance and perpetuity of the institutions of our country.

We claim no religious liberty that we are unwilling to accord others.

We ask for no civil or political rights which are not granted and guaranteed to citizens in general.

We desire to be in harmony with the government and people of the United States as an integral part of the nation.

We regard all attempts to exclude aliens from naturalization and citizens from the exercise of the elective franchise, solely because they are members of the Mormon Church, as impolitic, unrepublican and dangerous encroachments upon civil and religious liberty.

Notwithstanding the wrongs we consider we have suffered through the improper execution of national laws, we regard those wrongs as the acts of men and not of the government; and we intend by the help of Omnipotence, to remain firm in our fealty and steadfast in the maintenance of constitutional principles and the integrity of this republic.

We earnestly appeal to the American press and people not to condemn the Latter-day Saints unheard. Must we always be judged by the misrepresentations of our enemies, and never be accorded a fair opportunity of representing ourselves?

In the name of justice, reason and humanity, we ask for a suspension of national and popular judgment untill a full investigation can be had and all the facts connected with what is called the "Mormon question" can be known. And we appeal to the Eternal Judge of all men and nations to aid us in the vindication of our righteous cause:

WILFORD WOODRUFF, GEORGE Q. CANNON, JOSEPH F. SMITH,
Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

LORENZO SNOW, FRANCIS M. LYMAN, JOHN W. TAYLOR,
FRANKLIN D. RICHARDS, JOHN HENRY SMITH, M. W. MERRILL,
BRIGHAM YOUNG, GEORGE TEASDALE, A. H. LUND,
MOSES THATCHER, HEBER J. GRANT, ABRAHAM H. CANNON,
Members of the Council of the Apostles.

JOHN W. YOUNG, DANIEL H. WELLS, Counselors.

OFFICIAL DECLARATION

Prohibiting Plural Marriages.

To Whom it May Concern:

Press dispatches having been sent for political purposes, from Salt Lake City, which have been widely published, to the effect that the Utah Commission, in their recent report to the Secretary of the Interior, allege that plural marriages are still being solemnized and that forty or more such marriages have been contracted in Utah since last June or during the past year, also that in public discourses the leaders of the Church have taught, encouraged and urged the continuance of the practice of polygamy,

I, therefore, as president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, do hereby, in the most solemn manner, declare that these charges are false. We are not teaching polygamy, or plural marriage, nor permitting any person to enter into its practice, and I deny that either forty or any other number of plural marriages have during that period been solemnized in our temples or in any other place in the Territory.

One case has been reported, in which the parties alleged that the marriage was performed in the Endowment House, in Salt Lake City in the spring of 1889, but I have not been able to learn who performed the ceremony; whatever was done in this matter was without my knowledge. In consequence of this alleged occurrence the Endowment House was, by my instructions, taken down without delay.

Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages, which laws have been pronounced constitutional by the court of last resort, I hereby declare my intention to submit to those laws, and to use my influence with the members of the Church over which I preside to have them do likewise.

There is nothing in my teachings to the Church or in those of my associates, during the time specified, which can be reasonably construed to inculcate or encourage polygamy, and when any Elder of the Church has used language which appeared to convey any such teaching, he has been promptly reproved. And I now publicly declare that my advice to the Latter-day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land.

Wilford Woodruff,
President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

President Lorenzo Snow offered the following:

"I move that, recognizing Wilford Woodruff as the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the only man on the earth at the present time who holds the keys of the sealing ordinances, we consider him fully authorized by virtue of his position to issue the manifesto which has been read in our hearing and which is dated September 24th, 1890, and that as a Church in General Conference assembled, we accept his declaration concerning plural marriages as authoritative and binding."

The vote to sustain the foregoing motion was unanimous.